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Consumer Needs - The Base of Attitudes for Purchasing Foreign Products and Brand Products

Małgorzata Bartosik-Purgat*

Abstract: Consumer behavior is a popular marketing research area. There are many different factors influencing the way the identities behave. Consumer needs are the first step in the process of consumer behavior, they influence the consumers' decisions and that's why they form the base for marketing activities of companies. The main purpose of this paper is to show the differences of needs between young consumers from European countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Finland and Great Britain) and their relations to attitudes for buying foreign and brand products.

Keywords: brand products, ethnocentrism, consumer needs, European cultures, marketing implementation

JEL Classification: M310

Introduction

Human beings constantly have basic and advanced needs which they incessantly try to satisfy. Thus needs are inseparably associated with humanity while the main means used to meet one's needs can be found in the environment. The particular consumers' behaviors are driven by particular needs which thus have an impact on it's activity.

When it comes to defining 'need', for the most part it is defined as some kind of state of an individuals when they miss/feel the shortage of (pejorative form) or are interested in something (positive form). The same definition presents K. Goldstein (year 1939). He describes need as 'a shortage of something which individual is trying to fill'¹. M. Pohorille similarly defines need, claiming that shortage arouses an organism to action toward removing it². The product utility is the gist of need, not the need itself. Thus, it (through the agency of motivation) is a driving force for the activity leading to satisfaction of this need. What's more, J. Senyszyn claims that

* Małgorzata Bartosik-Purgat is at Poznań University of Economics, Poznań, Poland.

there is no action without needs and that there are no needs not causing any kind of action³.

Shortage or lack of something makes the needs appear (becomes a starting point). However the need itself makes realize the existence of 'target and desired state'. S. Kaczmarczyk contends that describing the need requires defining four following elements: cause, state of an individual, purpose and means essential for accomplishment. Basing on the mentioned theory, author gives wide definition of this term which explains that need is 'the awareness of desired or natural state of the organism which when is not fulfilled becomes the direct reason for the purposeful aspiration for it's satisfying with the use of particular means and conditions'⁴. There can be many reasons causing one need. Furthermore, this reasons are caused by other factors which indirectly influence on creating needs. In the view of the author, need is „the component of cause-and-effect chains’.

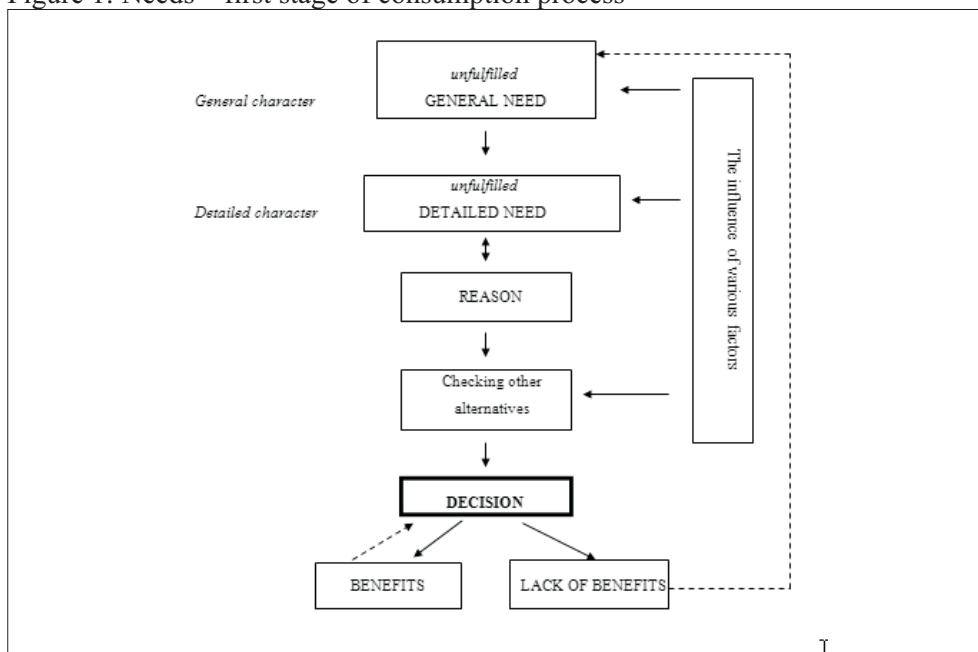
The character of consumer's needs deriving from different foreign markets, is determined by many factors, mostly by economic and cultural development of the societies. The cultural and personal factors create the complex which causes requirements reflecting the individual's needs. In other words, personal and cultural factors influence leveling the tension caused by needs and desired target state. Functional need may turn out to be a social need in other country. For example, bicycle in China is considered as a functional need because it's used for transport. However, on the north-American market, it is a social need because it is mostly used for recreation. M.R. Solomon points two kinds of needs ⁵:

- utilitarian – boils down to desire of gaining functional or practical benefits, for instance applying the diet in order to lose weight,
- hedonistic – boils down to experiencing emotional reactions and fantasies, gaining memorable experiences, fulfilling dreams, e.g. we would love to taste vanilla ice creams at particular moment and we're missing and thinking about them.

Between needs and other components linked to character and features of an individual, exist many correlations. The components influence the life style and activity of human beings (the diversification of needs depends on living conditions of an individual) which mostly depends on the character of needs. Social psychology highlights the large meaning of needs in a process of setting the attitudes. On the other hand consumer's needs and desires are also molded by their values. These, however, mainly depend on society (group) to which the individual (consumer) belong⁶. In relation to personality of an individual, the needs result from it's structure.

It needs to be highlighted that need equals one of the first stages of consumers' behavior and consumption. The beginning of this process depends on appearing (creating) the need which mostly is a driving force for creating new products and services (the human activity which consist in creating means essential for fulfilling needs is termed production). Satisfying needs boils down to owning such products or services which will help remove its shortage. Ensuring maximum benefits from the consumption of the bought products or services is also the main goal of an individual. That's the reason of frequently conducted detailed analysis which leads to the right choice (it also depends on other external factors, e.g. cultural ones). Two-way correlation can be noticed between the decision concerning choosing the particular product and benefits gained from its consumption. The right choice ensures reaching maximum benefits which causes repeated purchase of good or service (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Needs – first stage of consumption process



Source: own study

In the literature there can be found many classifications presenting various needs of an individuals. There can be noticed a polemic deciding on which is better, more detailed etc. The few models presented by different authors were chosen and presented in this paper, distinguished by the criterion of source from which the particular need derives.

M.R. Solomon presents one of the simplest classification of need where two main kinds of needs are: inborn ones, (for instance, food, water, air, shelter) and needs that aren't inborn, called psychological which for example consist of status, power and membership⁷. The author contends that psychological needs are being gained through belonging to the particular cultural group because they reflect the priorities of the group. As an example, he compares American consumer who spends a lot of money just for highlight his individuality and Japanese consumer who works hard in order to make sure he's not standing from the group. It should be add that American society belongs to individualistic cultures and Japanese society is collectivistic one.

Other author - J. Szczepański – divides needs (in terms of dominant element) into: real needs (caused by lack of something); edging needs (also consist of social, cultural, psychological, economical factors) and apparent needs (they arise as a result of development of edging needs, fulfilling them can „lead to biopsychological or internal systems' regression in which the unit exists, for example alcohol or drug addiction'). The same author points the components of needs, among others⁸:

- basic element – related to physiological condition, for example thirst, hunger etc.,
- psychological element – the particular need is not equally received by a members of different cultures etc.,
- element of social and cultural environment – created by norms, traditions, values etc.
- and apparent character of need– presented as an emotional attitude of the individual towards the environment, for instance following the fashion, desire to stand out from the environment.

Different classification presents C. Murphy who distinguished four kinds of needs: biological, active (e.g. motion, activity, rest etc.), esthetic (e.g. selection of colors) and emotional (e.g. feeling of satisfaction)⁹. H. C. Warren on the other hand, divided needs into six categories: life maintenance (sleep, food, air), specie reproduction, environment protection, aggression, social intercourse, activity (e.g. curiosity)¹⁰.

In the view of other author - H. Moore, individual's most important needs which influence their activity are needs of gaining, accomplishing goals, equaling other people and surpassing them, personal and family protection¹¹.

V. Schrab pointed as many as ten groups of needs consisting of: need to earn more money; providing security in old age; gaining popularity, kindness, respect; providing high quality of life, social promotion, personal prestige; improving the look; maintaining good physical condition also entertainment and pleasures.

Also very important classification, from the consumers' behavior point of view, is the one presented by E. Kieźel who distinguished three groups of needs basing on the things that help fulfill them¹²:

- production needs (economic) – related to the demand on products (intermediate goods) and services not directly associated with consumption but production of goods and services
- consumer needs (economic) – directly related to consumption (derive from consumers) but not leading to production,
- the other needs (non-economic) – needs linked to particular types of attitudes which don't require products or services to be fulfilled, e.g. need to be loved.

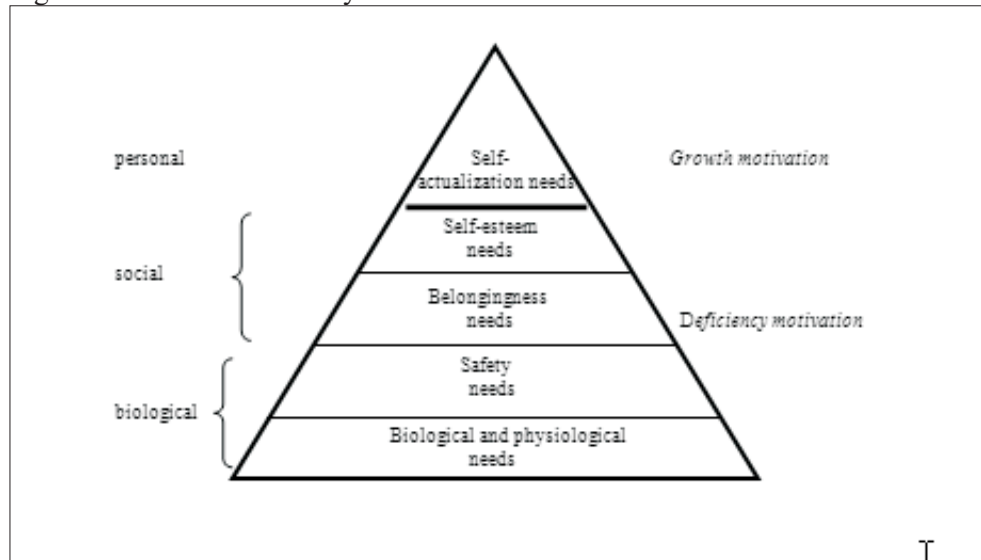
The presentation of various classifications of needs closes the one presented by F.B. Herman who distinguished (basing on different criterions) groups of needs which are located at the end of continuum. The above mentioned groups present as follows¹³:

- absolute and comparative,
- basic and advanced,
- burning and non-burning,
- positive and negative ,
- constant and unusual,
- present and future,
- private and social.

Presented brief considering the classification of needs reveals the complexity of the problem. What's more, the overwhelming number of scientists (mostly psychologists) claim that it's very difficult to distinguish and classify all of human being's needs.

One of the most widely known researcher – beside the ones yet presented – is A. Maslow. His classification is quoted and used in empirical research till these days. He was trying to explain why some of the needs emerge in particular moments¹⁴. In his theory, he proposed that 'human motivations in every society and time are hierarchically arranged'¹⁵. He has set up so called Maslow's hierarchy of needs which arrange them in order of urgency of its satisfying.

Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Source: Maslow, 1970, pp. 62-82.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs (that means 'selection in terms of level of urgency'¹⁶), those most basic ones are physiological needs (hunger, thirst, sleep, sex, body protection etc.). The other levels consist of safety needs (sense of security, stability, shelter, order etc.), social needs (membership, friendship, love – the awareness of being loved, acceptance, feeling of being important to others etc.), belongingness needs and esteem needs (the need of admiration, prestige, status, independence etc.). The first four layers of the pyramid are characteristic of 'deficiency motivation' because they appear in a situation when something is missing. The last group of needs (placed on the top of the pyramid) consists of self-actualization needs which are connected with individual development of individual (self-satisfaction, experience enrichment). They are related to growth motivation because they make individuals constantly develop and live the way it was destined¹⁷.

Beside the main needs placed in Maslow's hierarchy, there are also so called additional needs such as cognitive (knowledge, meaning) and aesthetic needs. The author contends that they can be only linked to some of the individuals and lack of profound knowledge very often makes them associated with self-actualization needs.

The higher needs in Maslow's hierarchy only come into focus when the lower needs in the pyramid are satisfied (in order presented in the hierarchy). This Maslow's opinion is considered as a certainty. In other words, if one of the basic needs is not fulfilled, individuals do everything to satisfy it in first place. Once those

needs are fulfilled, they are able to think about fulfilling highly-classified needs (e.g. the person doesn't care about it's status if she/he feels hunger or doesn't have roof under it's head). Secondly the need which was once fulfilled is not an incentive anymore (need- reason relation). Needs placed on higher level and haven't been satisfied yet always motivate. The other certainty in Maslow's theory is that the similar kinds of needs can be fulfilled by different types of products and consumption.

Even though Maslow's theory is commonly quoted and used in researches concerning needs of individuals, it is also constantly criticized. The main accusation, presented by some of the scientists, is the abstract character of it's attitude. According to the critics, more valuable and practical attitude towards motivation is the one focusing on consumers' behavior (the feature of consumers' needs is it's economical character). That's the reason why J.G. Hanna applied Maslow's hierarchy of needs to describe the examples of particular products or services which fulfill particular needs¹⁸. Table 1 presents the motivation issue related to consumers' behavior in context of A. Maslow's conception.

Table 1: Motivation focused on consumers' behavior in context of Maslow's conception

Needs according to Maslow	The examples of consumers' behavior – product categories
Self-actualization needs	- products enabling develop oneself, e.g. trips, education, hobbies, entries to museums and theaters
Esteem needs	- products „helping' gain the recognition of the other people by making the person look wealthy, e.g. designer's clothes, cars, furniture, credit cards, exclusive sport centers located outside the town, high-proof spirits, cars etc.
Belongingness needs	- products making the buyer look like an outstanding person in the eyes of other people, e.g. luxury products, new products also clothes, beauty products, clubs and drinks
Safety needs	- buying the sufficient number of products which ensure „financial collateral', e.g. insurances, alarm systems, pension, investments and also products which ensure physical safety (in order to avoid damage), e.g. seat belts
Biological and physiological needs	- medicines, elementary and essential products such as food or beverages

Source: Hanna, 1980, pp. 83-104.

In the field of motivation and need theories which are a topic issue of many researches, the main goals are not only to find the correlation between different types of needs and factors which determine them but also to show the correlation between particular needs and aspects of consumer behavior. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is as

well a frequently used research tool in all over the world. The research based on the importance of particular needs, conducted among young consumers from different European countries, is presented below. The research concerns the needs presented in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The main goal of this paper is to show the importance of the young European's needs and compare them with the particular aspects of consumer behavior (the attitude towards foreign products and brand products).

Research Hypothesis

Basing on the literature and observations of the young Europeans consumers' behavior in context of the presented matter, the following hypothesis were advanced and verified.

Hypothesis 1: The Maslow's pyramid presenting the order of fulfilling needs differs from the order established by representatives of different countries who took part in the survey¹⁹.

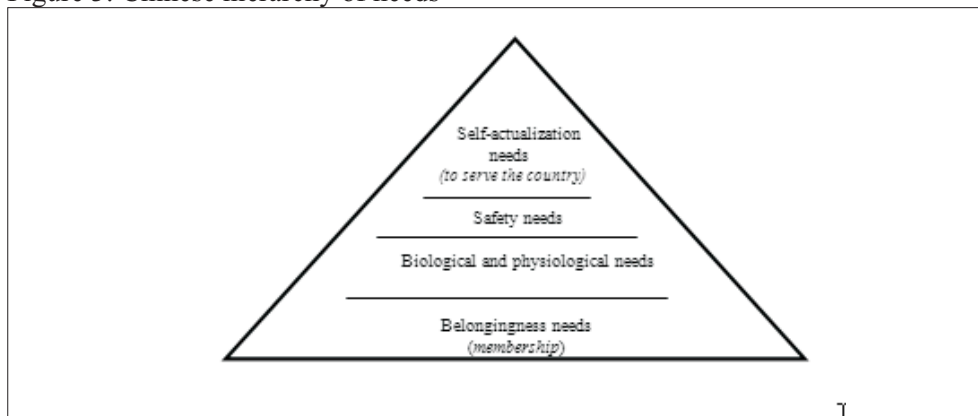
Hypothesis 2: The hierarchy of needs differs between respondents from the researched European countries (cultures).

The results of different researches indicate the influence of social factors on emerging the particular needs and way of fulfilling them. O.H.M. Yau contends that (basing on the empirical research) fulfilling the need with the use of particular product, brand but also consumer preferences, depends on the overall social condition. What's more, the consumer values, which reflect social and environment influence, should affect needs satisfied by consumption decisions, thus consumers' behavior²⁰. In the view of the author, higher incomes and improved financial condition influence appearing the high-ranked needs, e.g. belongingness needs which cause increased demand for e.g. luxury products (such as the ones which all the celebrities and wealthy people have) and original products (usually very expensive).

Many researches highlight the fact that different structures of consumer needs all over the world have an impact on national culture and economic development of the country²¹. This concerns so-called acquired needs which distinct from inborn needs, appear as soon as the baby is born (eating, drinking). The biggest impact of culture on the hierarchy turned out to concern two lowest levels. The correlation between the level of individuals needs and the level of country's development can be explained by the fact that in less developed countries people have only most basic needs which are essential to survive. However, different cultures represent different hierarchies of needs. For example, Hindus put self-actualization need on the top of the hierarchy²².

In Greece, Japan or Mexico, countries which keen on avoiding the risk, safety need is the highly ranked need. Belongingness needs though are the most important ones in countries which prefer the high-quality lifestyle (Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland). The Maslow's theory on the other hand, is based on American society and it's linked to it's features²³. For instance, self-actualization needs placed on the top of pyramid show the individual features of American society. E.C. Nevis presents the similar „hierarchy of needs' model which is adjusted to the collective character of Chinese society.

Figure 3: Chinese hierarchy of needs



Source: Nevis, 1983, pp. 17-29.

The importance of the particular needs showed above reflects the values existing in the Chinese society which is considered as a collective culture where belonging to the group, clan, family, organization is the most important thing.

Methodology

The empirical research in the field of young Europeans consumer's behavior concerning importance of needs listed by A. Maslow and basing on the attitude towards brand and foreign products was conducted in years 2005-2007.

In the research, young consumers are defined as persons at the age from 18 to 30 years old, who firstly still study and very often depend financially on their parents. Secondly there are also individuals which study and work at the same time are financially independent and run independent households. The age range was extended to 30 years old persons on purpose because students from different European Universities have taken part in the research, presented in the next part of

the article. Because of different European education systems average age is also different in every country, e.g. in Germany it is definitely higher than in Poland or Portugal.

Total number of those polled accounts for 1362 persons representing different cultures. The sample structure was as follows: 391 Poles, 149 Czechs, 128 Spaniards, 164 Portuguese, 82 Frenchmen, 183 Germans, 146 Finns and 119 British. Most of the respondents were the university students representing above-mentioned countries.

In the survey a most classic type of non-random sample was used – purposeful selection. It means completely subjective and „convenient’ choice of the entities which participated in the research, in hope of receiving the most wide and complete information. An applied method has an impact on the results and it’s interpretation which means that the results shouldn’t be generalized for the whole population but they can characterize the respondents point of view.

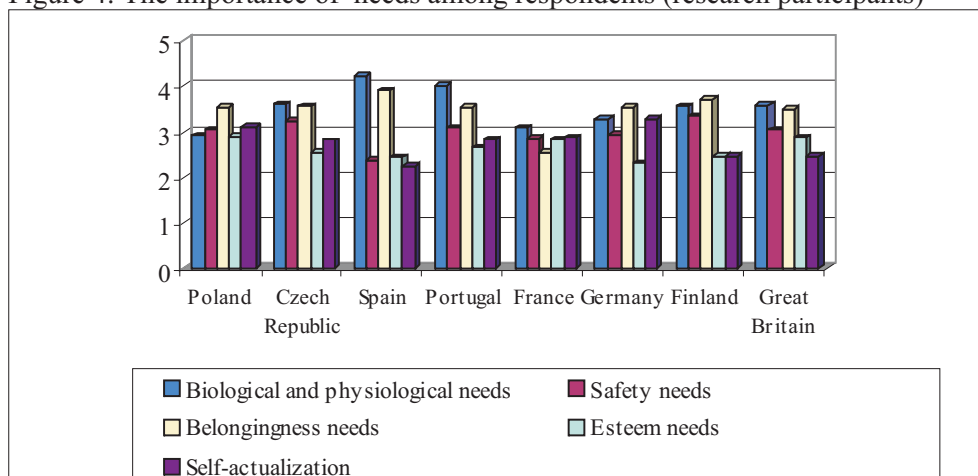
The questionnaire, which was the research tool, included question associated firstly with particular cultural dimensions²⁴, secondly three main internal factors (values, type of personality and needs), external factors (family) influencing buying decisions and finally questions concerning the particular consumers’ behavior (e.g. loyalty, level of innovation, sources for market news, attitude towards brand, ecological products, buying foreign products, criterions of choosing particular categories of products or the most popular places to go shopping). Handed out questionnaire was used to conduct the survey and became the main research method in the project.

The Consumers’ Needs in Relation to Researched Countries

In relation to the main topic of this paper, the respondents were asked to point these needs (presented in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs) which are most and least important in their life (those polled were asked to rank needs from one to five, where 5 represented the most important need and 1 represented the least important need). The average results are presented below.

Research shows differences in the level of importance concerning needs listed by A. Maslow but the differences among young Europeans are slight. As a most important need respondents have most often pointed biological and physiological needs (Spain, Portugal, France) and belongingness needs (Poland, German, Finland). The least important needs though were esteem needs. Below the detailed results, from all countries, are presented.

Figure 4: The importance of needs among respondents (research participants)



Source: own study based on empirical research.

Among needs distinguished in A. Maslow's hierarchy, for Poles, the most important ones turned out to be belongingness needs (3,55), that is membership, friendship, love – the awareness of being loved, social acceptance, the feeling of being someone important for somebody else etc. The self-actualization needs, that is personality development or self-satisfaction, came in second (3,13). Maslow's base level needs - biological and physiological needs (2,93) and safety needs (3,06) were pointed as the last ones in this group. The presented results show the character of young Poles for whom different aspects related to social life, feeling of belongingness, acceptance and constant personal development are more important than satisfying hunger and thirst. The importance of belongingness needs can be explained by the fact that Poles, more and more 'miss' the social relationships characteristic of past age (frequent meetings, no planned visits without any occasion, common celebrating etc.). The change of the system and economic situation caused 'cooling' social relations among Poles. Not only it concerns friends, neighbors but also families. Currently everyone is set on 'gaining' goods, goals accomplishment, late work etc. while maintaining good and wide relationships with other peoples is brushed aside. The revealed importance of self-actualization need may be one of the significant reasons of huge popularity of different types of trainings, postgraduate studies, language schools, courses, practices etc. Furthermore, nowadays, consumer attaches importance not only to the utility of the product but also to its esthetic factors. What's more, its buying preferences head towards immaterial aspects. Such elements as free time, individual development or individualism become more and more significant. Certainly it can be affirmed, that presented results depict the path of

Polish society development associated with changed economic system, increased competition on the labour market, opportunities to get a job out of the country or access to great number of brand products (also foreign ones).

In the opinion of Czechs, the most important needs are biological and physiological ones (3,6) which according to A. Maslow are (among others) hunger, thirst or shelter. Not less important turned out to be belongingness needs (3,57). Safety needs were pointed as third (3,26) and self-actualization needs as fourth (2,81). Esteem needs got at the end of the list (2,54).

Spanish respondents pointed biological and physiological needs which are related to hunger or thirst, as the most basic ones (4,25). The food cult and traditions associated with eating, are unquestionably correlated to the received results. Belongingness needs were also highly rated (3,89), what probably results from character of entities representing the polled group. Spaniards are very friendly indeed and need to be constantly in touch with people (family, friends). In comparison with biological and physiological needs, esteem needs (2,43) and self-actualization needs (2,26) which were swept at the end of the list, are much less important. It can be explained by the fact that Spaniards (especially young people) apply „carpe diem” principal which lay emphasis on making the current opportunities and joy. The fact that for Spaniards family is more important than constant competing and ‘fighting’ for better education, occupation or social status, justifies the results which show that self-actualization need - in terms of importance - is the least prioritized among other needs. For example, they don’t have a need to develop or upgrade their qualifications all the time. In the further analysis, comparable results can be presented for the particular values, where ambition and abilities were perceived as the least important.

According to A. Maslow’s model, the basic needs – biological and physiological ones also turned out to be the most important in the view of Portuguese (3,99). The other needs were pointed in following order: belongingness needs (3,53), safety needs (3,11), self-actualization needs (2,86), esteem needs (2,64). The importance of biological and physiological needs is surely associated with the food traditions. In the presented culture, the importance is attached to eating meals with the family or friends – which can be a result for belongingness needs that means: membership, friendship, love, feel of being important for someone else.

The belongingness needs linked to membership, friendship and love, are considered as the most important in young Frenchmen’s lives (3,53). Secondly, the biological and physiological needs, that means hunger, thirst and shelter etc., were pointed (3,1). Less important needs happened to be self-actualization needs (2,9) related to personality development and safety needs (2,87). Esteem needs which mean being praised and admired, respondents considered as the least important needs (2,83).

Young respondents from Germany highly rated belongingness needs (3,55) – membership, friendship and love. The other needs were pointed in the following order: self-actualization needs (3,29) - personal development, biological and physiological needs (3,28) including hunger and thirst, safety needs (2,95) – shelter, stability, security and finally esteem needs (2,31) – status, respect. The hierarchy established by the German group reflects the needs and values characteristic of most Europeans, who first of all desire to be loved, have many friends, be well educated and get a good job (to this end, very often they take part in different trainings).

Similarly, Finnish respondents pointed belongingness needs as the most important (3,7). Next they listed needs in the following order: biological and physiological needs (3,57), safety needs (3,36), self-actualization needs (2,47) and esteem needs – 2,46 – (however, in case of the last two the difference accounts for 0,01). It should be highlighted that (except highly rated belongingness needs) the order of needs turned out to be very similar to Maslow's hierarchy. The importance of belongingness needs can be explained firstly by the values presented by polled Finns (safety of the family, happiness or friendship), secondly by the moderate level of its individualism and finally by the young age of the respondents.

In case of British respondents, biological and physiological needs which relate to food consumption (eating, drinking), turned out to be the most significant (3,58). Belongingness needs associated with the need to have friends, feeling of being important, membership, love etc., came in second (3,49). The rest of the needs were listed in the presented order: safety needs (3,09), esteem needs (2,9) and self-actualization needs (2,46). The hierarchy of needs established by British respondents is the most convergent (in comparison with other European cultures that took part in the survey) with A. Maslow's hierarchy which is based on American society.

Despite criticism, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a widely applied tool used to understand needs and consumer's incentives. Furthermore, it is easily implemented in marketing strategies because the consumer products fulfill any kind of needs, placed in any level of the hierarchy. For instance, the individuals buy houses, food and clothes in order to fulfill their physical needs and insurance or financial services in order to satisfy safety needs. In case of almost all of the beauty products (cosmetics, shaving creams etc.) they are being bought in order to fulfill belongingness needs. High-tech products, such as computers or luxury products satisfy esteem needs (ego) while different kinds of trainings and courses lead to fulfill self-actualization needs²⁵.

The knowledge of the value of consumer's needs on the particular market zones, implicates the activity of marketing companies. For example, luxury cars producers use slogans promoting their products by highlighting its status – 'surprise your friends', 'make your friends impressed' (esteem needs). In order to fulfill

self-actualization needs the slogan may say: ‘the recipient deserves the best’. Or in case of belongingness needs, the slogans may say: ‘your family can be provided with comfort’²⁶.

Marketing specialist’s task is to ‘locate’ and describe consumer’s needs but also to indicate the way to fulfill them. Their goals does not involve creating and implementing new needs but showing what kind of needs the individual may have and with the use of which product they can be satisfied. For example, hunger need which is biologically determined, is fulfilled by the use of such beverages as water, juice, drinks (coca-cola and others), tea but not by goat’s milk. The following question emerges – why? The marketing professionals were the ones who showed (educated) majority of consumers how to meet ones needs²⁷.

Below presented results regarding the importance of particular needs, distinguished by A. Maslow, confirm both hypothesis. The collected and analyzed data, from all researched countries, is presented in table 2.

Table 2. ‘The place’ of needs based on importance presented in different countries

The character of needs	Results in context of importance							
	PL	CZ	ES	PT	FR	DE	FI	GB
Biological and physiological needs	4	1	1	1	2	3	2	1
Safety needs	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3
Belongingness needs	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
Esteem needs	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	4
Self-actualization needs	2	4	5	4	3	2	4	5

PL – Poland, CZ – Czech Republic, ES – Spain, PT – Portugal, FR – France, DE – Germany, FI – Finland, GB – Great Britain

Source: own study.

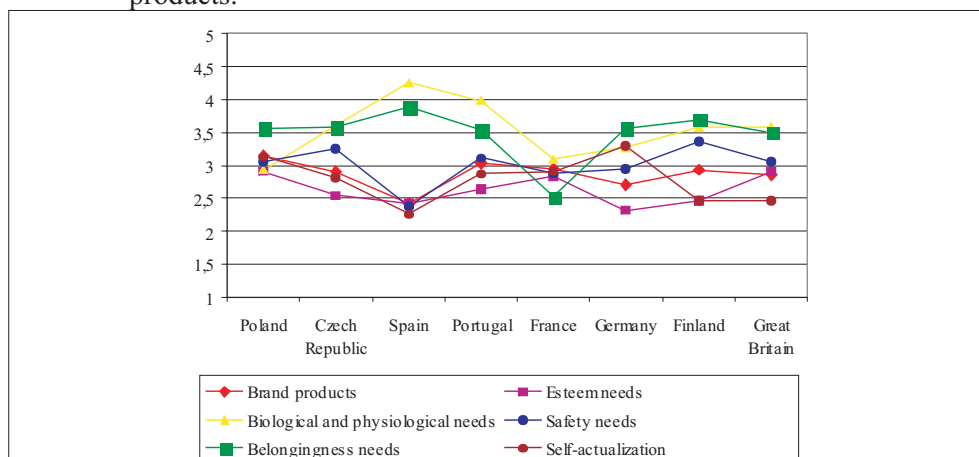
None of the researched countries gave the results convergent with the needs’ importance and A. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The most similar results were received in British group. It should be underlined that A. Maslow established the hierarchy base on the American society and its structure is determined by the order of fulfilling the needs.²⁸

In case of the second hypothesis, it should be highlighted that the order of particular needs in context of its importance also differs in case of respondents representing different countries (cultures). However, the differences were not significant and mainly they are determined by the cultural factors (e.g. values) characteristic for the societies.

The Young Consumer's Needs vs. Attitude Towards Brand and Foreign Products

While analyzing the results for importance of the particular needs, the relations between particular aspects of consumers' behavior revealed. The above mentioned correlation concerns esteem needs (respect shown by other individuals) and attitude towards buying, having and rating the brand products²⁹. It was noticed that in case of majority of those polled (Poland, Czech Republic, Germany and Finland) highly rated esteem needs are associated with more positive attitude for brand products. In case of Spanish, French and British group, the results were comparable in context of esteem needs and brand products. The detailed comparison of the collected data presents Figure 5.

Figure 5: The importance of needs vs. the respondent's attitude towards brand products.



Source: own study based on empirical research.

It should be noticed that also safety needs are positive correlated with attitude for brand products (almost in all researched countries). Brand products there are products associated with high quality, long-lasting, trust, fashion, etc. Usually, when people buy such products they are 'safe' that buy good product.

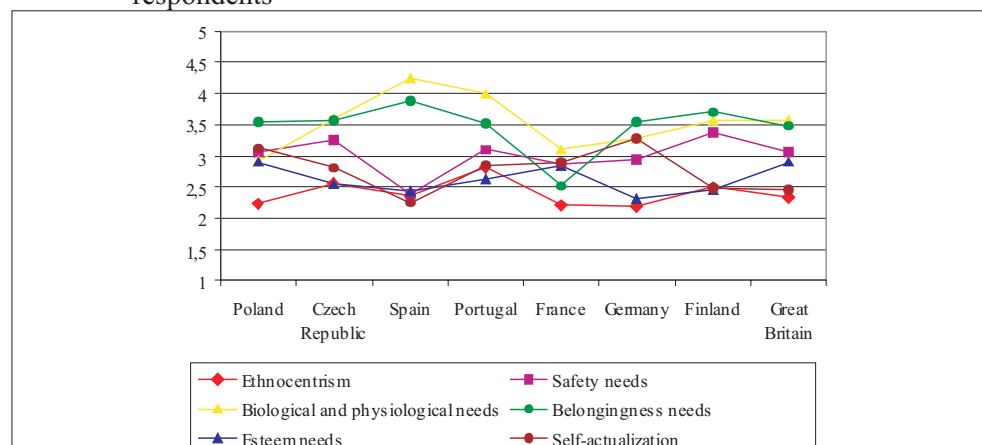
At the same time, it just be emphasized that the attitude of those polled towards brand products can be described as moderately positive and it's level is not that much distinguished between cultural groups. The lowest level towards purchasing and ranking brand products was characteristic for young Spaniards, and the higher level for young Poles (the discrepancies are not significant). The knowledge concerning meaning and importance of the brand is valuable from producer's point of view. When it's crucial, it should be promoted and adapted to particular conditions

(markets). Otherwise the other aspects (advantages) of the products like e.g. quality, low price or look (depending on the importance) should be highlighted. However the same brand cannot be used in every country. The significant impact on the main element of the brand – its name – has the linguistic diversity of the cultures. The name ('sound') of the brand is essential. It should be easy to pronounce for every consumer on different markets and not make inappropriate associations come to mind. The meaning of the same name transferred from one country to another or from one culture to another, is sometimes dramatically hilarious.

According to the results of the conducted poll it can be stated that brand products are considered to be the products representing guaranteed (usually high) quality, not necessarily always considered as modern. The consumers choose the brand products because they are trustworthy and they like them, rarely because they are used to them.

Safety needs and the level of ethnocentrism of those polled, present another relation noticed in conducted research³⁰. The consumer ethnocentrism - its high level characteristic for the society, is sometimes described as a concern with quality of life (economical safety) associated with e.g. level of unemployment. In the view of ethnocentrism, the level of unemployment depends on support for the domestic goods and lack of support for the foreign made products. However among the majority of those polled (with the exception of Spain) the relation between the importance of safety needs and the level of ethnocentrism was noticed. The higher the level of safety need is, the higher level of ethnocentrism is noticed. The detailed analysis presents Figure 6.

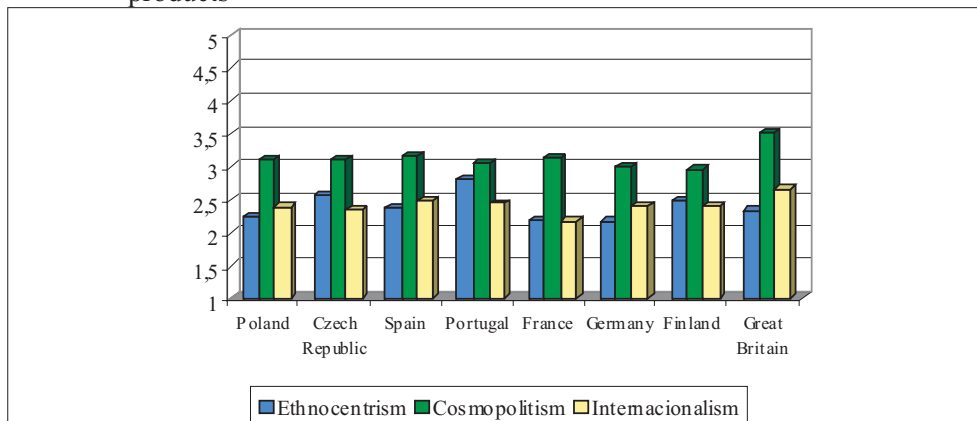
Figure 6: The importance of needs and the level of ethnocentrism represented by respondents



Source: own study based on empirical research.

According to the results, young consumers represent low level of ethnocentrism. That means they don't support buying domestic products exclusively. Those polled presented the biggest support for the cosmopolitan features related to attaching importance to other aspects (advantages) of the products rather than domestic or foreign origin (Figure 7). It was also confirmed while analyzing the importance of particular choice criteria, where country of origin was considered as not much important factor.

Figure 7: The attitudes of the young consumers in relation to the origin of the products



Source: own study based on empirical research.

The knowledge regarding the consumers' attitude towards brand products on different markets is very valuable for the companies which perform or want to entry these markets. This knowledge enables implement strategy - suitably matched (adjusted) to described buyers' attitudes. As long as it's acceptable, the foreign character of the product can be highlighted e.g. by emphasizing the country of origin (or related symbols). Especially when the positive match between product category and country of origin exists, for instance Swiss watch, French wine or German car.

Conclusions

Generalizing, above presented research concerning consumers' needs and particular aspects of their behavior indicate their similar features even though they are determined by different cultural zones. Young Europeans are the segment of consumers characterized by (for the most part) similar behaviors, presenting the adequate group for using in many fields standardization or semi-standardization

(adaptation in case of existing differences) strategy. What's more, they can represent consumers who is buying decisions and consumer behaviors are mostly 'free' from cultural differences (which though exist and were distinguished in case of certain cultural dimensions).

NOTES

¹ In: T. Słaby, *Consumption. Statistical essays*, Difin Publ., Warsaw 2006, p. 11.

² M. Pohorille, *Needs – classification – consumption*, PWE Publ., Warsaw 1985, p. 40.

³ J. Senyszyn, *Consumer's needs*, Gdańsk University Publ., Gdańsk 1995, p. 15.

⁴ S. Kaczmarczyk, *Applications of marketing researches. Marketing management and the company's environment*, PWE Publ., Warsaw 2006, p. 81.

⁵ M.R. Solomon, *Consumer Behavior*, Prentice Hall International Edition, 5th ed., 2002, p. 132.

⁶ K. Jai-Ok, S. Forsythe, G. Qingliang, J.M. Sook, *Cross-cultural consumer values, needs, and purchase behavior*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 19, no. 6, 2002, p. 485.

⁷ M.R. Solomon, *Consumer Behavior*, op. cit., p. 135.

⁸ J. Szczepański (ed.), *Consumption patterns' research*, PAN-IMS Ossolineum, Wrocław 1977, in: G. Światowy, *Consumers' behavior*, PWE Publ., Warsaw 2006, p. 29.

⁹ C. Murphy, *Experimental and Personality*, Harper and Brothers, New York 1937, p. 37.

¹⁰ H.C. Warren, *Human Psychology*, Houghton Mifflin Comp., Boston 1919, p. 106.

¹¹ H. Moore, *Psychology for Business and Industry*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1949, p. 512.

¹² See also: E. Kieźel (ed.), *The market consumers' behavior*, Katowice University Publ., Katowice 2002, p. 25.

¹³ J.U. McNeal, S.W. McDaniel, *An analysis of need-appeals in television advertising*, *Journal of the Academy of Marker Science*, Vol. 12, no. 1-2, 1984, pp. 176-190.

¹⁴ A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.), Harper and Row, New York 1970, pp. 62-82.

¹⁵ A. Aldridge, *Consumption*, Polity Press, Cornwall 2003, p. 17.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 14.

¹⁷ Look for more: C.S. Hall, C. Lindzey, J.B. Campbell, *Theories of Personality*, (4th ed.), McGraw-Hill, Boston 1998, pp. 439-444.

¹⁸ J.G. Hanna, *A Typology of Consumer Needs*, *Research in Marketing*, Vol. 3, 1980, pp. 83-104, in: G.R. Foxall, R.E. Goldsmith, S. Brown, *Consumer Psychology for Marketing*, 2Rev Ed edition, Thomson Learning, 1998, s. 189.

- ¹⁹ Assuming that the order in A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs equals the level of importance.
- ²⁰ Yau, 1994, p. 78.
- ²¹ In the particular society/country there can be found different structures of consumers' need usually resulting from the features of its personality (character), wealth, career and family situation etc.
- ²² R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton University Press, New York 1990, chapter 4.
- ²³ S.P. Robbins, *Organizational Behavior: Concepts, Controversies, Applications*, Prentice Hall; 9th Bk&Cdr edition, 2001, p. 112.
- ²⁴ The dimensions presented in the research, were chosen basing on the papers written by F. Trompenaars and Ch. Hampden-Turner, E. Hall oraz G. Hofstede.
- ²⁵ L.G. Schiffman, L.L. Kanuk, *Consumer Behavior*, Prentice Hall International Inc., New Jersey 2000, p. 85.
- ²⁶ Ibidem.
- ²⁷ M.R. Solomon, *Consumer Behavior*, op. cit., p. 41.
- ²⁸ The research was focused on the importance of fulfilling need and not the order of satisfying it.
- ²⁹ The attitude towards brand products was described basing on respondents agreeing with the following statements: 'I always buy brand products', 'brand products always represent high quality', 'I trust brand products', 'I consider brand products as long-lasting', 'I think brand products are modern', 'I'm used to buying brand products', 'I choose brand products of the well-known producers (popular brands)'. The more they agree with the above mentioned statements the better (more positive) attitude towards this kind of products they have.
- ³⁰ The level of ethnocentrism was indicated by respondents agreeing with the following statements: 'my society should always buy domestic products, rather than foreign ones', 'only those products which are available in my country should be imported', 'it's not right to buy foreign products', 'domestic products are first, last and first of all', 'it shouldn't be permitted to let foreign companies offer their products on other markets', 'we should buy foreign products which we can't buy in our country', 'the restrictions concerning import of foreign products should be implemented'.

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